

Commentary on the article “Nursing and midwifery students’ attitudes towards principles of medical ethics in Kermanshah, Iran”

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ABSTRACT

This study explores ethical attitudes among unmarried female students. Despite cultural and societal pressures, the study reveals positive attitudes toward medical ethics principles, highlighting the need for ongoing ethical education in healthcare. The authors address ethical dilemmas inherent in the research, emphasizing the importance of informed consent, confidentiality, and cultural sensitivity. They employ a socio-cultural theoretical perspective to contextualize findings within Iran's cultural framework, emphasizing the significance of understanding contextual factors in ethical decision-making. While the study employs a validated questionnaire, limitations include its scope and cultural sensitivity. Overall, the study underscores the importance of fostering an ethical culture in healthcare education and practice to uphold public confidence and maintain high standards of care.

Keywords: Attitudes; Ethical decision making; Ethical awareness; Ethical dilemmas; Medical ethics; Midwifery; Professional ethics; Students.

1. Introduction

We are writing this commentary to express significant concerns regarding the inaccurate citation of references in the aforementioned article authored by Haleh Jafari et al., published in BMC Medical Ethics, Volume 10, Article number: 13 (2019). The article provides a thorough evaluation of nursing and midwifery students' perspectives on medical ethics principles in Kermanshah, Iran. It examines their awareness, understanding, and application of ethical standards in healthcare, seeking to identify areas for improvement in education and practice (Haleh Jafari et al., 2019). The journal's moderate impact factor of "7.25," along with only 28 citations, suggests a greater probability of it being of high quality, thus justifying a thorough critique.

1.1. Objectives

- (i) Examine the cultural and contextual factors influencing nursing and midwifery students' ethical perspectives in the specific setting of Kermanshah, Iran.
- (ii) Discuss the implications of the study findings for healthcare education and professional practice in fostering an ethical culture among future healthcare professionals.
- (iii) Explore potential areas for further research to enhance understanding of nursing and midwifery students' attitudes towards medical ethics and improve ethical education in healthcare.

2. Commentary

The title of the study is somewhat concise “Nursing and midwifery students’ attitudes towards principles of medical ethics in Kermanshah, Iran”. The title's strength is evident in its clear reference to dependent and independent variables pertinent to nursing, complemented by the incorporation of the study setting, which

amplifies its robustness. The strength of this study lies in the inclusion of authors' names and corresponding addresses. However, a weakness is identified in the absence of qualifications, designations, and areas of work, which are essential details for reviewing research papers (Polit & Beck 2017). The study's abstract is clear, concise, and relevant, encompassing background, objectives, methodology, results, and conclusions within its 300-word limit, aligning with Coughlan et al. (2007) recommendations.

In this study researchers face an ethical dilemma rooted in cultural sensitivity and participant autonomy. The sensitive nature of the topic, coupled with Iran's cultural context, raises concerns about potential biases and pressures on participants. Students may feel compelled to participate or disclose their attitudes due to societal norms and religious beliefs, challenging researchers to ensure genuine informed consent and voluntary participation. Moreover, navigating power dynamics within academic settings and societal pressures adds complexity to obtaining informed consent and maintaining confidentiality.

Researchers must balance the need for valuable data with the ethical imperative to protect participants' autonomy and respect cultural nuances (Castro et al., 2020). This involves transparent communication, meticulous adherence to ethical guidelines, and fostering trust with participants and the community (Dankar et al., 2019). Addressing this dilemma requires researchers to navigate the intersection of cultural sensitivity, scientific rigor, and ethical considerations. By upholding principles of research integrity and participant welfare, researchers can strive to mitigate potential biases and ensure the study's validity and ethical integrity (Houska & Loučka, 2019).

Applying a socio-cultural theoretical perspective illuminates how cultural norms and religious beliefs shape nursing and midwifery students' attitudes towards medical ethics in Kermanshah, Iran. This lens underscores the significance of contextual factors in understanding participants' responses and highlights the complexities of navigating power dynamics and societal pressures within academic settings. By acknowledging and examining these influences, researchers can better interpret and contextualize the data, enhancing the study's validity and contributing to a deeper understanding of ethical decision-making in diverse cultural contexts (Garcia, 2020).

The questionnaire, developed by Motamed Jahromi and Dehghani (2014), offers a comprehensive assessment of professional ethics, validated for reliability and validity (Asl et al., 2022). However, it may lack scope and cultural sensitivity, potentially oversimplifying scoring and missing crucial aspects of ethics, limiting its applicability. The study was conducted during a single academic semester, which might not capture potential fluctuations in students' attitudes over time or in different contexts.

This study involving unmarried female nursing and midwifery students in Kermanshah, Iran, revealed positive attitudes towards medical ethics principles, irrespective of gender, field of study, marital status, or age. No negative or neutral attitudes were noted, indicating a strong commitment to ethical awareness and adherence (Horta et al., 2023). This highlights the need for further research to understand additional influences on ethical attitudes and to enhance ethical education in healthcare (Demir & Akpınar, 2022).

Overall, the study reveals positive attitudes towards medical ethics principles among nursing and midwifery students in Kermanshah, Iran, emphasizing the need for ongoing ethical education to maintain high standards of care (Hoseinaliabadi et al., 2022). Despite demographic differences, students exhibit a strong commitment to

ethical awareness and adherence (Horta et al., 2023). This underscores the importance of fostering an ethical culture in healthcare education and practice to uphold public confidence in the healthcare system (Grace & Uveges, 2022; Garcia, 2020; Varkey, 2021).

An ethical dilemma arising from this article could involve the potential conflict between educational priorities and patient care. For example, if nursing and midwifery students exhibit poor attitudes toward medical ethics, there may be concerns about their ability to provide ethical and compassionate care to patients. This raises questions about the responsibility of educational institutions to ensure that students receive adequate training in ethics and professionalism before entering clinical practice. Balancing the need for comprehensive education with the imperative to protect patients from potential harm poses a significant ethical dilemma.

The article sheds light on the importance of addressing ethical attitudes among nursing and midwifery students, highlighting potential challenges in upholding medical ethics in clinical settings. It emphasizes the need for comprehensive educational initiatives to promote professional ethics and suggests enhancing awareness of ethical principles among healthcare staff. Overall, the article underscores the critical role of ethics education in ensuring high-quality patient care and ethical practice within healthcare settings.

3. Conclusion

We suggest revising the article due to inaccurate citations by Haleh Jafari et al., emphasizing the importance of fostering an ethical culture in healthcare education. Future research should enhance generalizability by expanding sample sizes and including students from various medical disciplines. Additionally, nationwide studies could explore how environmental factors and educational programs influence students' ethical attitudes toward medical ethics.

Declarations

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No funding has been reported.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Consent for Publication

The authors declare that they consented to the publication of this commentary.

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